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A FEW WORDS UPON AN OLD PROBLEM

BY HILLARY BELL.

With original illustrations by Emmanuel and Jean Benner.

It is safe to say that almost every young man who studies art in Munich or Paris believes that he has a message for the world on the vexed problem of the nude. Consequently a great many youthful enthusiasts, who consider draperies merely a modern makeshift and hold themselves commissioned to reveal the true beauties of "the altogether," presently discover that the public has another view; and those who started out in life, guided by an ambitious purpose to illustrate the human form, very often have to succumb to the tailor, or woo fortune in her kinder moods by turning to landscapes, marines, interiors, or cats and dogs.

However, some men with remarkable gifts and success, steer safely between the Scylla of the difficulties of the nude, and the Charybdis of a public indifference to its beauties, and arrive at what may be termed the harbor of prosperity. Such fortunate painters are Emmanuel and Jean Benner. The briefest glance at this sitting figure proves unmistakably that Emmanuel Benner puts his heart into his work. This is the luxury of painting. It has nothing of the wanton sensuousness of Rubens'



From a painting by Jean Benner.

PHROSINE AND MELIODORE.



From a painting by Emmanuel Benner.

BEFORE THE BATH.

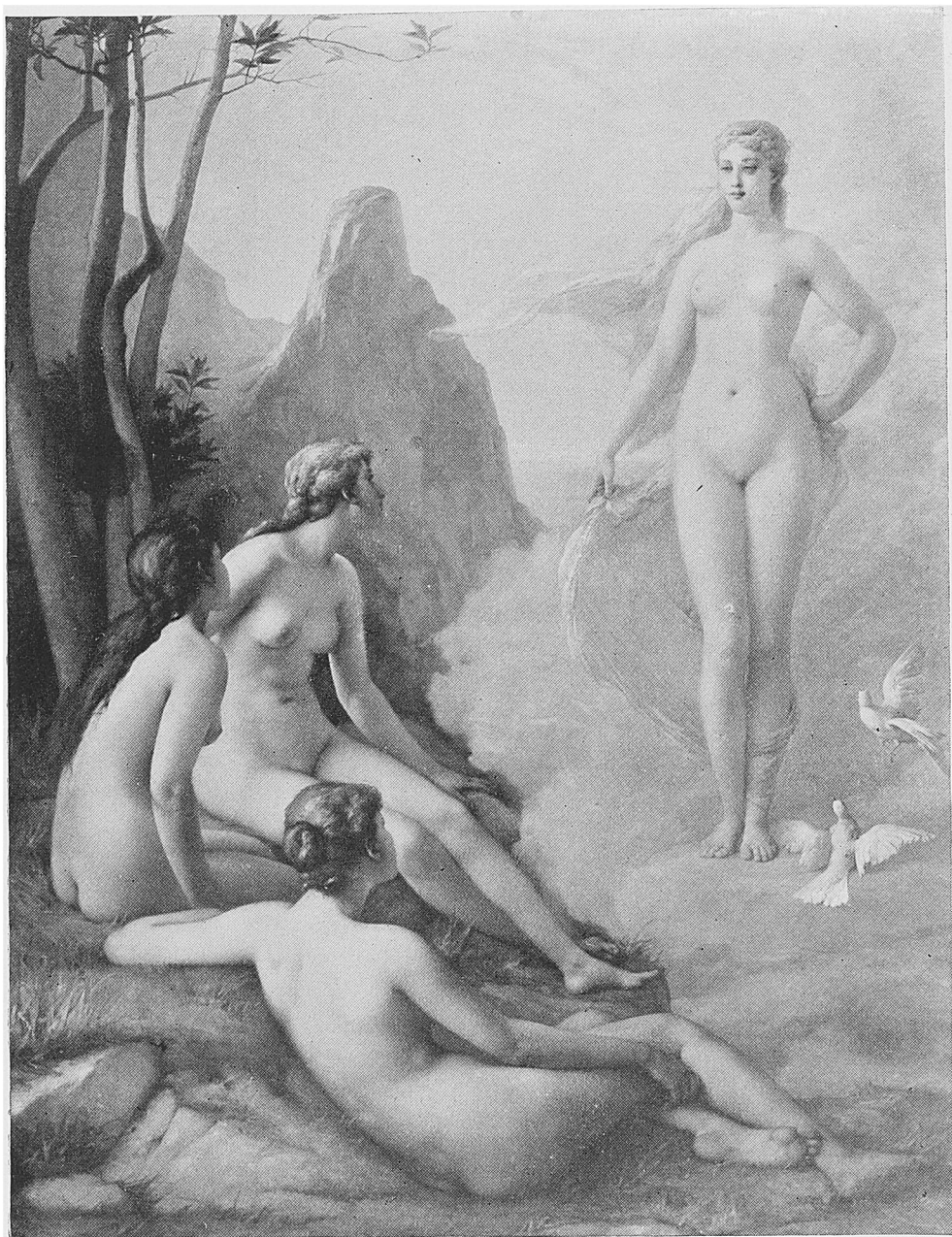


From a painting by Jean Benner.

AUTUMN FLOWERS.

flesh, but is done faithfully, simply, and well, by an artist who realizes what is the finest theme of art. The dignity of the pose, the tenderness of treatment, and the nice values of light and shadow, declare this artist's joy in his subject.

The larger composition is not so felicitous, yet there is no suggestion of mental struggle in any of the figures, and some of them have given as much pleasure to the painter as they bring to those who study his work. In the prostrate figure of the



From a painting by Emmanuel Benner.

VENUS APPEARING TO THE THREE GRACES.

smaller canvas this feeling of contentment is again pronounced. The draped figure by Jean Benner is a scarcely less graceful expression of the artist's fancy.

When men can coax flesh into its perfection of tint and modelling, as in many particulars it is tempted by the Benners, the true enjoyment of painting begins. With such facile skill and admirable technique the nude may be followed without fear of the critics, or dread of grieving the sensitive yet essential public.